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Grandfather's Stories.

BRIEF SKETCH

OF

ABIGAIL BROWNE,

OF

SALEM, MASS.

See here thy pictured life : pass some few years,
Thy flowering Spring, thy Summer's ardent strength,
Thy sober Autumn fading into age,
And pale concluding Winter comes at last.
And shuts the scene. Virtue sole survives,
Immortal, never-fading friend to man,
His guide to happiness on high.

THOMSON.

BOSTON :

S. K. WHIPPLE & CO.

1852.

parents and grandparents of Ephraim Brown. He married Hannah Howe in Northfield Dec. 3, 1775. She was daughter of Abner Howe and Mehitable Holden. The Browns are said to have come from Stowe, Mass., and after Ephraim's marriage he moved to Westmoreland, N. H.

4. Samuel and Eleazer Brown, brothers, were among the early proprietors of Rutland, Mass., in 1731, going thither, with many of their neighbors, from Concord. Samuel Brown was born at Chelmsford Dec. 8, 1700, and was the oldest son of Eleazer, who was born at Chelmsford April 2, 1676; married Abigail Chandler of Concord Feb. 1699-1700; removed to Concord in 1703; died there April 3, 1755; widow died March 20, 1786. He was oldest son of Eleazer, who was born at Concord July, 1649; married Dinah Spaulding of Chelmsford Feb. 9, 1674-1675; was one of a company of fifty who in 1686 purchased of Jonathan Tyng "one moiety or half-part of the Waymosset lands which were sold by the Indians to the said Jonathan Tyng"; removed with his wife and all his family (excepting Eleazer), to Canterbury, Conn., before the year 1704. He was the third son and fourth child of Thomas Brown, the first of the line in America, who, with his wife Bridget (family name is not known) was in Concord as early as 1641. The wife Bridget died in Concord March 5, 1680-1681, and Thomas removed to Cambridge, where he died Nov. 3, 1688.

G. T.

2. Wanted, the ancestry of David Brown and Lydia Swetland, his wife, married in Hebron, Conn., Oct. 15, 1701; he was one of the early settlers of Peru, Mass.

ABIGAIL BROWNE.

WELCOME, dear grandchildren. At my invitation, you have come to spend a winter's evening with me. It is freezing cold without, but comforts are all around us. While our hearts feel for the suffering poor, we should be thankful to our divine Protector, for his constant mercies towards us. We are now favored with an opportunity to exchange our social sympathies more fully, than when on pleasant visits at your parents' house, with a company of their friends.

You have occasionally heard me relate short biographies of individuals of different ages, characters and conditions. On such occasions, it has been my desire

and purpose to impress thoughts on your minds, which might encourage you to make the best improvement of your time and talents, as the necessary means of preparing you for the duties and events of the present and the future world. From my knowledge of your appearance and deportment at these exercises of your attention, I am assured, that it will be no irksome task for you to hear the following story. True, it is more particularly a religious one, than some others, which I have related to you. But this should be no objection on your part. We have spirits, which constantly need be made familiar with the obligation and experience of piety, as much as our bodies to know what is suited to their nourishment, and to partake of it as temperance dictates. Did we allow the great Physician of souls to free us from the palsy of error, the wonder with us would be, not that we occasionally speak of such subjects; but that we suffer ourselves to be so very silent about them. The prophetic decree has

gone forth, that a marked change, in this respect, shall be wrought throughout the world. May it be soon accomplished, so that the great mass of our race, young and old, may be raised from their low standard of mental habits and social conversation.

You have often read and heard, that example has great influence in the formation of character. You have seen this truth verified in some, who have suffered themselves to be led away by the vicious, and in others, who have wisely imitated the virtuous. When it is good, it resembles the beacon light, that falls on the anxious vision of wanderers, helps them recover their lost course, and reach the homes of their desire and affection. But when it is evil, it is like the black and stormy cloud, which bewilders the traveler and leads him to the brink of a precipice, so that, with but one step more, he sinks and perishes in the gulf below. "Example draws where precept fails."

These considerations induce me to gratify your curiosity by a sketch of one, who, many years ago, gave evidence of having found the pearl of great price. This is a discovery, far exceeding that of Columbus, which opened a Western Continent to his delighted eyes and to the longing desire of European millions. True, the estimation and conduct of most among our race, have never endorsed this remark as worthy of universal acceptance. But the truth of heaven, which is beyond all just dispute, does fully and frequently. Such authority should forever decide the question with us.

The individual, so alluded to, was an inhabitant of our own native place. Her name was ABIGAIL BROWNE. She was born in Salem, 1719. Like the fairest flower, cherished for its attractions of beauty and excellence, she was cut off in the morning of life. Before, however, we specially notice an event so sad to her surviving connections, do you wish for us to consider

several other particulars, as to her immediate relatives, privileges, and some customs of her day? You all answer in the affirmative. I will try to conform with your proper desire.

Abigail belonged to a family, remarkable for their generous benefactions to this community, in its concerns of charity, education and religion. These connections were noble specimens of the power, which true Puritanism, not its caricature, had over their minds, hearts and lives, so as to keep such gifts of Infinite goodness from the indulgence of sinful propensities, and raise them to the high, holy and happy standard, which they should ever hold. Though they long since passed away, the effects of their generous deeds will never perish. The purified gale, which courses by you, bears upon its wings the elements of health to the animal, and of verdure to the vegetable creation. Every object which it fans and influences, gives indications of its worthiness to be blessed. So with transi-

tory life, sanctified and filled with the fruits of beneficence. However gone beyond the reach of mortal sense, its impression on multitudes, till the end of all things, is divinely preserved with more certainty, than the richest spices that ever embalmed the body of Egypt's proudest monarch.

The father of Abigail was Samuel Browne. He enjoyed the confidence of many friends. His wealth was great; his services and honors were numerous and eminent. Her mother bore the same Christian name which she did, and was the daughter of John Keach, a distinguished merchant of Boston. She was called to part with this beloved parent, who died February 18, 1725, in her 39th year. Thus was removed the endeared and congenial support, around which the tendrils of her strong affection had entwined themselves, in the hope that they would not be so soon broken and withered. But the kindness of Omnipotence, which "tempers

the wind to the shorn lamb," still watched over the stricken child. The claspers of her love, separated from the mortal part of her sainted mother, were divinely revived, shot forth in a higher direction, and inseparably cleaved to her glorified spirit. Such communion, in remembrance of the precepts and kindnesses of this parent, in desires and anticipations of a speedy reunion with her, where no sorrows of sin intrude, where the full enjoyment of perfection knows no end, was a consolation to the heart of Abigail, above and beyond all earthly price. Though the balm of mercy was so provided, the occasion was an impressive lesson to her, that, in this state of trial for another world, the young as well as the old, must feel the pangs of separation from the nearest and dearest relatives.

The heavy loss, which she sustained, may be learned from Cotton Mather, the former pastor of Mrs. Browne. He stated in a sermon on the decease of this lady, that he baptized her nearly forty years

previously. He added as follows: "Her early piety declared her to have the wisdom of that woman, of whom the wise man has made this remark, 'A woman that fears God, it is she shall be praised.' She was highly esteemed by all that knew her, and universally loved and honored among this people; but most so by those, who best knew her and most conversed with her." What an obituary notice! Had it merely said of its subject, she was beautiful, talented, accomplished, attractive, and took a lead in the fashionable circle, it would have represented her as fearfully lacking in qualities of character, essential to the enjoyment of the endless futurity, whose wonders had already opened on her enlarged experience. But while it neither mentions nor depreciates the proper culture of mind and manners, which helps to fill up the measure of probation with usefulness, it speaks of a disposition and deportment, that contribute to improve and bless life, to mingle the light of hope

with the shadows of death, and administer an entrance on the employments and glory of angels. If truly applicable to each of you, my dear children, and to me, when summoned to leave our temporal attachments, it will be of far greater worth to us, than the costliest monuments ever erected to the memory of the dead, who lived only for worldly praise and earthly pleasures.

Before we accompany the mortal remains of Mrs. Browne to their last resting place, you would like for me, as you have already signified, to notice some events of the mournful ceremony. Though remarks were made to the collected relatives and acquaintances, by the minister, suited to impress their minds with the uses of adversity, and the necessity of preparation for their own latter end, yet, in accordance with the custom then prevalent, he omitted to offer a prayer, as afterwards became the practice on similar occasions. Gold rings, commemorative of the deceased, hat

bands and scarves, some of the latter for females, and gloves for both sexes, were liberally distributed. As the usage was then, wines and spirits, sugar and spices were abundantly prepared, under the mistaken and injurious notion, that they were needful for the large assembly. As the long train took their way from the residence of the departed, to the family tomb on the Burying Point, the women, two and two, were followed by the men in like order. Some of these observances, which seem strange to you, were subsequently changed. Those which remain, with the addition of devotional service, should have their intended effect. They are forms, which should so influence our purpose and actions as to prove, that a participation in them is far more beneficial, than communion with those of thoughtless feasting and revelry.

We will now give our attention more particularly to Abigail. While blessed with a parent, whose great desire, prayer and

effort were, to have her children not only respected in life, but, above all, continually and abundantly more fitted for the holy and blissful society of heaven, she felt herself under great obligation to God for such a mercy. When her sensibility was wounded by the harsh look, word or neglect of irritable acquaintances; when perplexed as to the concerns of even her daily routine; when disappointed in any of her anticipated enjoyments, she had a mother, to whose ear she could freely relate the tale of her sorrows; to whose fidelity she could intrust her secrets, and on whose benevolent advice she could depend with confidence and consolation. When affectingly reminded of her own mortality by the sudden decease of a loved playmate, did she ask herself, as is reasonable for those of every age, am I prepared for so solemn an event? Then she could hasten to this more than friend, and receive instruction from her lips. Then she was taught, according to her Bible, that by deep sorrow

for constant deficiency in the perfect service, divinely and justly required of all our race ; by an affectionate, grateful and obedient reliance on the Holy Spirit for growth in piety, and on the Saviour for deliverance from the condemnation of the law, she could have a hope of safety, which was able to disarm death of its terrors and cheer her with the foretaste of a blessed immortality.

Privileges of this kind are of incalculable worth. In heaven, where the delusions of sin never exist, where the mind no longer sees through a glass darkly, but perceives every subject, within its range and comprehension, as it really is, they hold a high place among the means for training the soul to derive its purest pleasure from the duties of godliness. How exceedingly desirable then it is, that mothers, who exert more influence for the weal or woe of their children, than all others, should break from every false principle, and, in the broad daylight of eternal obligation, guide their off-

spring to the fear, love, service, protection and enjoyment of their heavenly Father? Thanks be to Him, dear children, that you have a mother, whose soul is tenderly alive to your spiritual and everlasting welfare; whose heart panteth for nothing more, than that you may be numbered among the lambs of Christ's flock, and be made partakers in the endless benefits of his redemption. You do not think so much of this now, as you will when called into the eternal world. I earnestly desire and pray, that you may deeply feel your obligations to so faithful and worthy a guardian. Realize how much she has suffered and done for your best welfare. Whenever she speaks to you of your faults, so that you may correct them, be not offended, but second her efforts with your own exertions no more to pain her heart with your misbehavior. Whenever she advises you to improve your opportunities for study, and to be faithful in all the calls of your education, feel that she does this from the kindest

motives, for your benefit, and never cloud her anticipations as to your future course, by neglect or disobedience. Especially, when she points you to the great concerns of your souls; to the claims of the Gospel, which would have you remember your Creator in the morning of life, heartily comply with her instructions, so that you may be the crown of her endless rejoicing. This do, and you will forever, hereafter, give thanks to Him, who sitteth on the throne, for the gift of so excellent a parent.

The obligation so binding on you, was wisely discharged by Miss Browne. No wonder that she was deeply grieved, when her mother was removed to a mansion in the heavens. No doubt her father and brothers, amid their own affliction, endeavored to alleviate hers with the tender expressions of sympathy and love. However thus desirably consoled, her chief consolation was in the promises of the Saviour, who had provided the only sufficient balm for a wounded spirit.

While so called to pass through the test of trial, Abigail had every earthly comfort. According to your desire, already expressed, we will look back and survey the manner, in which she was the partaker of more than ordinary enjoyments. While doing this, we will keep in mind that a large portion of the facts adduced, are presented on the authority of prevalent fashion among our richer inhabitants.

The mansion, in which Abigail dwelt, was one of the most eligible in town. It was situated in what is now called Essex street, but formerly King street, when our fathers were under the government of Great Britain, and the "King's Arms" were common on the signs of our taverns and stores. Its more particular situation was on the premises of Market square. It was made of wood. Bricks for dwelling houses, were then unpopular. The style of its roof was of the Mansard description. The size of its glass for the windows, was small compared with that even

in our present ordinary habitations. As an unusual ornament, it presented the spectator with a well painted exterior, and a similar attraction for its inner apartments. Instead of side bells, a brass knocker was upon the front door, to give notice of visitors. The best rooms, of low stud, were set off with tapestry and paper hangings, pictures of persons and landscapes, a few looking glasses and carpets of foreign manufacture. In addition to these, were other articles, as need or taste had provided. When the frosts of winter reigned, neither stoves nor coals threw out their fervid heat; but large fire-places, with a liberal supply of wood, gave a comfortable reception. While such places were fitted with marble hearths and fenders in front, they had porcelain tiles on the top and sides. The last of these appendages contained historical representations, often from the Bible, which attracted the notice of children and supplied useful materials to their memory. On the right and left of

the fire-places were shovels and tongs, sustained in their upright position by fastened hooks of steel or brass. A still more requisite addition were the andirons to hold the fuel, or, as some ancient inventories of estates have it written, "endirons." While the best apartments were so accommodated, those not so good, had their cob irons for the consumption of spikes, from which the corn was shelled.

The mansion so provided by its owner, with the luxuries as well as the necessities of life, was no stranger to the visits of men in high official stations. It was here that Governor Samuel Shute, in 1716, "had a splendid entertainment."

With regard to the hours of hospitality then and since, a marked change has taken place. When the social coteries of friendship were gathered at one of their houses, it was early in the afternoon. Tea, at that period a rare commodity, was taken at five or six o'clock, and at nine o'clock they were dispersed and the visitors on their way

home. They did not convert the night into day, nor the day into night, and so they escaped the ills of such excess.

Under regulations of this kind, and with all the comforts of wealth, the residence of Mr. Browne had strong attractions for his daughter. Still she knew, that it could not keep her body from the narrow tomb, nor her spirit from the boundless expanse of eternity. Thankful for its daily contributions to her enjoyment, she hoped to exchange it for a mansion, indestructible by fire or storm or time, and eternal in the heavens.

Among the members of Mr. Browne's household, were colored slaves. Then human bondage was legally sanctioned in our own and other British Provinces. But Abigail was influenced by a principle, which, however allowing the necessity of difference in rank as to mental abilities and acquirements, social condition and qualifications, regards all mankind, of whatever hue, clime or tongue, as fellow-

beings, bound to treat each other as free, and entitled to mutual benevolence. She looked through the medium of divine truth, and estimated character and eternal prospect, not by grades in community, nor by outward circumstances, but by the mind and heart, as affected by the religion of the Messiah in belief and conduct. Such judgment, like that of every one, taught at his feet, far surmounts the philosophy of Jews and Greeks, who closed their ears on his precepts, claims and invitations.

When Miss Browne wished to write her relatives in Boston, her letters were forwarded from Salem post-office by a carrier on foot. An exercise of this kind with her pen, was very useful in waking up her associations of thought, and learning her to express them with correctness and ease. It is worthy of strong commendation, because the longer it is practiced, the more it becomes the source of the higher sort of amusement, and takes the place of idle and injurious imaginations. There were no stage-

coaches, swiftly drawn by horses through the town, and steam-cars were not even dreamed of, as the bearers of her epistles.

When she accompanied her parents to the capital of this Province, it was in their family wagon, of genteel mechanism and appearance. The route for an excursion, so full of gratification to her taste for rural scenery and the interchange of gratulations among relatives, was much longer, than it has been since. It led through Danvers, Lynn and Malden to Chelsea ferry, whose boats conducted them over to Boston. In those days, the enterprise of accommodations for travel in the civilized world, was so restricted, that a bridge from Charlestown to the metropolis was considered and treated as visionary.

While abroad among her virtuous connections, Abigail was not only pleased, but acquired profitable information and refinement. She had been often taught, that her manners, impressions and reputation depended greatly on associating with those

of worthy habits, principles and deportment. She believed this truth and was glad to put it in practice. The lily of the valley, while in its genial location, is comely to your sight and proffers you its grateful aroma. But take it away, and place it under different influences, it soon droops and loses its attractions. So it is with early life in its intercourse with the good and the evil. The former of these is fitted to give it a direction of excellence, and the latter, one of self-debasement and bitterness.

Perhaps, dear children, you would like for me, as we pass along, to mention the fashion of dress in the time of Miss Browne, with regard to her sex. Those of her condition wore the finer sort of leather, silk and satin shoes, with high heels, square as well as round toes and buckles. The last of these were of solid silver, and sometimes brass, washed with the former metal. Instead of convenient India-rubber shoes, they appeared with goloeshoes and pattens

to guard against the wet. The color of hose, whether silk or woollen, was generally red, though those of other hues were worn. Fans and umbrellas were not abundant. Parasols were not used. To keep off the sun, dust and cold wind from the face, masks, suitably fitted, were common. Watches were seldom carried by elderly ladies, and not at all by their juniors. Bonnets of various kinds were in vogue. Among them were jockeys and hats of satin, and, also, of white and black horse-hair. A grace was imparted to them by the appendage of waving feathers. Gowns were large at the shoulders, had sleeves to the elbows, where they were set off with ruffles; made deep in the waist, prepared for stays; and thence flowed upon the ground with great circumference, sustained by hoops. Some of such garments opened like robes in front, and exhibited nice and well wrought skirts, often covered with silk or muslin aprons. To cover the hands and arms, "white-top lamb gloves" were con-

siderably worn. Camblet cloaks appeared in their season. They were of light colors for the young, and went by the name of riding-hood. While observing the style of dress, Abigail did not suffer it to become the idol of her affections. She was actuated by motives which taught, that however propriety of attire was needful, it was far less important, than well-trained minds and hearts, than the ornament of spirit and life, which fit the soul to move in circles of celestial perfection.

Surrounded with ample means, no pains nor expense was spared for her education. Free schools were not so proportionably numerous and elevated, to afford instruction to both sexes of children, as now. Only such of those were taught at the public expense, as had parents unable to pay their quarter bills. The privilege of girls was far less than that of boys. The most of them were learned nothing more than to sew, spell and read. Our high schools for females, were then unknown.

The improvement made in this respect, rejoices the heart of every friend to the best interests of community. Next to true religion, intelligence, properly applied, is the richest source of happiness. One of the most liberal promoters of free education among our inhabitants, was the father of Miss Browne. Had she lived to inherit her large share of his fortune, there is cause to believe, that she would have exhibited similar generosity. In accordance with her more than common opportunities to learn, she was improved in mind and manners. Still, as there has never been any royal road to knowledge, and all the young, whatever be their condition, must begin with the like rudiments and make similar application of their talents, in order to be delivered from the darkness of ignorance, it may please you to hear of the books, studied in her day.

The first, among them, was the Horn-book, so called, because its covers were made of horn. Then came the Primer,

with its precepts in prose and verse, partly illustrated with impressive cuts. Next the Psalter, containing the Psalms of David; and the Bible, the precious repository of revealed truth. Of the volumes for other attainments in Abigail's pupilage, was the Arithmetic of Hodder, the Grammar of Bullokar, and the Geography and Astronomy of Moxon. For advancement in ornamental work and painting, she had convenient opportunity.

While the powers of her intellect were opening to the invitations of knowledge, she perceived that such improvement was purified, elevated and enriched by the wisdom of Christianity. Experience of this sort, led her to deny sympathies and preferences for human over divine instruction, and to choose the discipline of her talents and affections, which would train her to the love and practice of the Redeemer's doctrines. This was indeed walking by the true light, which alone can guide us to the supply of our mental and spiritual

necessities, and to conformity with the end of our being, the purpose of our continued mercies and the unchangeable laws of Deity.

We pass from the schooling of Miss Browne, and accompany her to the sanctuary, where she worshiped. This was the first church, standing on the spot selected by our venerated fathers for so sacred an occupancy, and opposite the residence of Hugh Peters on the north. It was a high, wooden edifice, with gambrel roof. It had two galleries, one over the other. In the front of its pulpit was an hour-glass to measure time, instead of a clock. The custom of seating each sex by itself, and persons according to age, tax and rank, had begun to be omitted in her time. The singers sat promiscuously among the congregation. They sang one line at a time, as it was read to them by the ruling elder, without the accompaniment of any instrumental music. With these customs, she, when assembled with others for worship, felt

that God was present to search and know her thoughts, desires and intentions; that he required her so to join in the praises and devotions, and so hear the truth of the Bible preached, as to grow in scriptural knowledge, and be better fitted for the duties and events which awaited her. To her, the Sabbath was a rest from worldly care, surrounded with hallowed associations, which purified and strengthened her hope of communion with the redeemed, in the temple where Christ is the great high priest. The same obligation in kind, which she cherished in her heart, should lead you, dear children, to spend your sacred hours, so that they may rise up in the day of your final account, and witness that you are among the true worshipers.

With this reflective view of a daughter, surrounded by many attractions, it seems to most minds, undisciplined in the school of piety, as if it must have almost broken her heart, when assured that she must bid a speedy and perpetual farewell to so goodly

a heritage. But it was not so with her, nor is it so with others, who have learned heavenly as well as earthly wisdom. At the same time, however, it is sadly true, that many, who have sure symptoms of approaching death, whether their situation be connected with poverty or riches, are loth to leave it and enter on the scenes of an endless world of happiness or misery. I can tell you of a boy, who was near the grave. He was an amiable lad, and much liked. Still, when thus solemnly situated, he was heard to say, thinking himself alone, "I can't die ; I do not want to die ; I am not fit to die." Ah ! who can describe the deep anxiety of his soul ; who does not earnestly wish that he had been piously educated, and obeyed the commands of his Saviour ? We have a very different example in Miss Browne. The instructions of the family, school and sanctuary were not lost upon her heart, but were sanctified to it by the Holy Spirit, so that they shed brightness on her passage through the val-

ley of death and up to the presence of her Judge. Hear the record of a hand, long since mingled with its kindred dust. Though its author be dead, it still speaks for his praise and happiness with the blessed. It gave a title, common in that period for daughters of distinguished parents, though in their minority. Salem, April 16, 1729. Died, "Mrs. Abigail Browne, in the tenth year of her age. By her dutiful behavior, much endeared to her father, and, at her death, discovered a pious inclination to depart and be with Christ, which gives reason to trust, that she has left the plentiful estate here, to which she was heiress, for a more durable inheritance in a better world." What words of consolation to her afflicted relatives! The good hope, that departed connections have become partakers of a blissful immortality, is the best source of comfort to the survivors; is the most efficacious balm to heal the wounds of such bitter separations. What a fitting description for one, summoned to forsake all

temporal concerns, and enter on the experience of realities without end, and forever have the truth opening to her perception, that nought but holiness leads to happiness—nought but conformity with the image of God can ensure communion with Him and abounding delight in his presence!

Would you, dear children, so strongly entwined around my heart, die the death of the righteous and have your last end like theirs, then, as it is divinely and immutably appointed, you must cherish their faith and live their life. Thousands of sinful inducements would have you believe, that it is too soon for you to discharge so reasonable a duty. But give them no credit. They allure to betray, and deceive to destroy. You look on the animal world. You perceive every thing there, which is enticed to omit seasonable and suitable means for its preservation, come to an untimely end. Take warning from such lessons. If you put aside the messages and aids of your Maker, that you may answer

the great purpose of your existence, time, talents, and mercies, you must pay the dreadful forfeit. You do not suppose, that it is ever too soon to love and obey your earthly parents. But your heavenly Father has far stronger, far more numerous claims on you, than they have, however excellent. Be consistent, then. Hearken to his counsel, while there is accepted time,—“Seek me early, and ye shall find me.” This do, and then each of you may constantly address him with unshaken confidence in his promises,

“And thou wilt turn our wandering feet,
And thou wilt bless our way ;
Till worlds shall fade, and faith shall greet
The dawn of lasting day.”

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